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Input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Africa to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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Please recycle

Key messages of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

[Original: English and French]

I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Environment, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, convened the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, in Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 May 2017, in preparation for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, to be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017.

2. The third session of the Forum was attended by 415 participants, comprising high-level representatives of Governments of all 54 of the ECA member States, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders,[1] United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and other international organizations.

3. Since 2015, the Africa Regional Forum has been convened on an annual basis in Africa to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. The Forum promotes coordination and coherence, and the learning and sharing of best practices. It serves as an important mechanism, not only for tracking progress in implementation, but also for keeping all the stakeholders in Africa mobilized and engaged to strengthen their commitment to concerted action, and to garner international support for efforts to translate the Sustainable Development Goals and aspirations of Agenda 2063 into measurable and shared prosperity that benefits the planet and its people.

4. The theme of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was "Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all". This theme is well aligned with that of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017: "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world."

5. The third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development undertook an in-depth review of the implementation of the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals[2] for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017, under the following corresponding sub-themes:

(a) Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa;

(b) Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa;

[1] The term "major groups" refers to the following sectors: groups and associations of women, children and young people; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers.

[2] Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; and Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

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(c) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all;

(d) Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(e) Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation;

(f) Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

6. The review under each sub-theme examined the required enablers and means of implementation.

7. The follow-up and review during the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was preceded and informed by outcomes of the tenth session of the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development; the Africa regional workshop on preparations for the 2017 Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017; and the preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region.

II. Chair's summary of the key messages

8. The following is the Chair's summary of the agreed key messages on the theme and sub-themes of the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for policy dialogue, policymaking and implementation at the national, regional and global levels, towards the realization of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and those of Agenda 2063. These messages constitute Africa's regional input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017.

A. Ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity for all and overall success in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

1. Introduction

9. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in Africa hinge on fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. The attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment and the consideration of youth in development planning and implementation are critical dimensions of inclusion in the region. Notable evolving factors that must be taken into account to eradicate poverty and promote well-being and prosperity in Africa include population dynamics, the changing climate and resource constraints created by the depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation, including pollution. Thus, to restructure their economies and achieve sustained growth, African countries have identified the following as some of the priority areas for domestic and foreign investment: transformation of agriculture, resilient infrastructure, industrialization, innovation, and sustainable management of natural assets, including marine resources. These areas correspond to the six Sustainable Development Goals for in-depth review at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017.

2. Key messages

10. Key messages include:

(a) The 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 call for bold, transformational change to build fairer, more inclusive, healthier, more prosperous and more resilient societies

that use natural resources sustainably and create opportunity for all. Both The Agendas see development as a process that requires holistic approaches, which, in turn, balance and integrate the economic, social and environmental pillars of development;

(b) The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 calls for inclusive and integrated approaches to their implementation and for reporting that builds on existing mechanisms and integrates the reviews of the outcomes of the major conferences of the United Nations and the African Union, as key contributions to the realization of sustainable development. Thus, it is important to support the countries in mapping the two Agendas and to ensure their convergence with the national development plans at every stage of the planning cycle;

(c) To implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, it is important for the Governments of Africa to design measures that expand domestic resource mobilization, through areas such as: improving tax administration; broadening the tax base and eliminating loopholes for tax avoidance, especially among the rich; prioritizing expenditures with the biggest impact on the less privileged; monitoring the reach of public spending to intended purposes; and fighting illicit financial flows by, among other things, building tax audit capacity and strengthening cooperation on tax matters to contribute to the domestic resource mobilization efforts of developing countries. Concessional external financing, official development assistance, and capacity-building should also assist African countries in this important aspect;

(d) Voluntary national reviews are at the forefront in demonstrating and catalysing progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on account of the emerging good practices and lessons learned in domesticating and implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. More countries are encouraged — and should be supported — to undertake and widely disseminate the outcomes of their Voluntary National Reviews. Countries are also encouraged to strengthen national frameworks for follow-up and review to allow adequate inputs to Voluntary National Reviews from major groups and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society;

(e) For timely policy decisions and adequate comparison within and between countries, the national statistics offices across the continent require international assistance to build stronger capacity for gathering and analysing disaggregated data on a broad range of issues relevant to sustainable development. The national statistical offices, supported by development partners, therefore need to strengthen their statistics development systems and data gathering and management plans to support the monitoring and reporting requirements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in a harmonized and integrated manner;

(f) African Governments and other stakeholders recognize the importance of the data revolution for accelerating the continent's sustainable development. This is embodied in the Africa Data Consensus and in the African Charter on Statistics. In order for Africa to harness the full transformative power of the data revolution, significant investment will need to made in the following areas: human resources; technological capabilities; platforms and tools; and in establishing effective governance frameworks related to the production, processing, protection, ownership, quality, openness, timeliness, relevance, accessibility, harmonization, inter-operability and use of different types of data, regardless of who produces or owns them. Development partners are also called upon to support the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, in building the capacity of national statistics offices in Africa;

(g) Successful implementation of both Agendas requires an effective institutional architecture for an integrated and coordinated approach and

multi-stakeholder engagement in problem-solving, policymaking, and planning and implementation. Strong and capable national and subnational planning agencies are paramount in ensuring that the various sectors work together to ensure that the three dimensions of sustainable development are reflected in all aspects of development programming. Long-term planning and policy coordination, and ongoing progress monitoring, as well as impact evaluation, are needed to identify what works, and to address policy failures and gaps. In the context of leaving no one behind and pursuing inclusive growth and prosperity for all, Governments need to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement — including private sector and civil society — in design and implementation plans and monitoring of progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

B. Eradicating all forms of poverty in Africa

11. Key messages include:

(a) Economic growth is a necessary condition for poverty reduction in Africa, but growth alone is not sufficient. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ending poverty in Africa will require accelerated and inclusive structural transformation through economic diversification and accelerated industrialization;

(b) For Africa to harness the demographic dividend, growth needs to be sustainably high to create sufficient decent jobs and absorb the growing working-age population. It needs to be inclusive, to expand choices and create livelihood opportunities for all, especially women and young people, and to achieve substantial and broad-based improvements in human well-being. Moreover, investments in inclusive, high-quality education and skills development must be increased. Investments in peace and security and effective and responsive institutions are critical to harnessing the demographic dividend and for attaining sustainable development;

(c) Social protection programmes should be expanded and appropriate schemes should target the poor and most vulnerable, including indigenous populations, the ageing population, children, women, young people, and persons with disabilities; in addition, appropriate skills should be nurtured through high-quality education. Technical and vocational training and entrepreneurial development can further reduce poverty in Africa. The African Union Ouagadougou+10 process on employment, poverty eradication and inclusive development identifies social protection as one of its six priority areas, which is also reflected in the African Union's First Five-Year Priority Programme on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development (2015-2019);

(d) Africa should expand domestic resource mobilization through increased economic growth for broader and progressive taxation, to allow increased public investment on employment promotion and social protection, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in 2015. In addition, Africa should strengthen partnerships within the framework of South-South cooperation to leverage resources for financing;

(e) Investing in the capacities of people, communities, economies, cities and countries to prevent, reduce and manage risks arising from climate change and natural hazards, conflict, economic, political and social instabilities, is critical to building resilience and achieving broad-based sustainable development;

(f) Addressing calls to eradicate poverty by harnessing the potential of women, who form half of the population, to ensure that they enjoy full human rights and have access to opportunities through deliberate gender policies that address the structural causes of poverty and eradicate the increasing burden of poverty on

women and expand women's access to economic opportunities and resources. It also calls for addressing social and cultural practices that impede Africa's progress towards the goal of gender equality;

(g) Formulating and implementing policies that address poverty requires an understanding of the different and multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality, which goes beyond income. This includes rural, urban, age, disability and gender-based intersectionalities of inequality towards eradicating poverty;

(h) Weak data systems and data gaps in some member States pose serious challenges for effective monitoring and evaluation of progress in eradicating poverty. In particular, weak disaggregation of indicators, whether by gender or location, poses further challenges for data collection and analysis. In this context, target 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical: to "leave no one behind" and to "reach the furthest behind first". This target promotes monitoring of disaggregated data by "income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts";

(i) The means of implementation, including financial assistance through continued Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains vital to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 by 2030. Developed countries must honour their historic obligations and responsibilities, as part of the commitments made in the context of the Global Partnership for Development, which itself also needs to be expanded and strengthened, also in the context of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR);

(j) It is important to reinforce the existing modalities and programmes for international assistance of groups of countries in special situations in Africa. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development must devote adequate time to addressing poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges facing African countries, in particular, those that are the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States;

(k) An area of importance in eradicating poverty in Africa is to effectively address illicit financial flows and the negative consequences that flow from it. Multinational corporations and other such entities should make their rightful contributions in the countries where their revenues are generated to assist African Governments in their poverty eradication programmes and to reduce risk;

(l) It is important that African countries and civil society organizations receive the necessary international support, including through appropriate partnerships, to ensure that no one is left behind and to achieve eradication of poverty, sustainable development and stronger resilience, especially for those in extreme poverty (people living on less than $1.25 per day), vulnerable groups, young people, women, persons with disabilities, and older people. Such support is also important in the context of a rights-based approach.

C. Ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa

1. Introduction

12. Fighting hunger in Africa is a national and regional security issue and needs to be dealt with as a matter of gravest urgency. Africa should employ "all necessary measures" as it would in a state of emergency.

13. Africa's food security and nutrition situation are worsening in absolute terms. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that the number of undernourished people increased by 30 per cent between 1990 and 2016.

The situation is particularly severe in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, where up to 23 million people in 11 countries have been affected by recurrent drought and floods, severely endangering food security and nutrition. The food insecurity situation is aggravated by the continuing conflicts in some countries and unfavourable weather conditions, including droughts and flooding, in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. These challenges must be addressed as part of an overall continental strategy for agricultural and rural transformation.

14. Agricultural and rural transformation is critical not only for ending hunger and achieving food security in Africa, but also for addressing many other pressing issues in Africa, including employment, industrialization, empowerment of women, ending protracted crises and conflict, and building resilience to climate change. However, African agriculture faces daunting challenges, including low productivity, environmental and soil degradation, climate variability, loss of biodiversity and, of particular significance, chronic underinvestment.

15. Integrating climate-resilient agroecological adaptation approaches for on-farm production with clean energy for value addition represents an opportunity to maximize productivity and render climate-proof African food and agriculture systems.

2. Key messages

16. Key messages include:

(a) The interplay between low productivity, low incomes, and stagnant and degraded agricultural production systems in Africa has resulted in entrenched hunger — an almost intractable problem that weighs massively on Africa's development and consigns millions of Africans to lives of misery. As a result, the problem of global food insecurity has become, in large degree, an African phenomenon. Yet the means to address this profound challenge are mostly to be found within Africa itself. The key is to address the three elements — productivity, purchasing power and production — through a comprehensive, integrated approach to tackling food insecurity;

(b) It is critical that all actors — farmers, agrifood businesses, private sector, civil society and other stakeholders — assume their respective roles and responsibilities. Small farmers themselves must be empowered as the critical agents of change. Policy priority must go to ensuring their access to the required productive resources, to a supportive enabling environment, and to appropriate institutions. Integrated multisectoral and multidisciplinary approaches led by Governments at the national level are crucial to tackling the complex root causes of conflict and food and nutrition insecurity;

(c) These root causes include, among other things: degradation of land and water resources, low or declining agricultural productivity and incomes, exposure to recurrent drought and floods, and political instability resulting from uncertainty over access to land and water resources. Using new tools, such as shock-resistant social protection, Governments have powerful, proven means to encourage local development and promote new and innovative agricultural practices that provide more consistent yields, improve sustainability, conserve water and soils, maintain or increase biodiversity, or improve resilience to droughts and floods;

(d) Tracking and reporting progress — to support mutual learning and accountability — is essential for sustained effective action. Governments, with support from development partners, need to establish or strengthen comprehensive, integrated, and cost-effective monitoring and reporting systems to follow up the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to provide the evidence base to inform coherent and integrated policymaking;

(e) In the context of Africa's rapidly growing urbanization, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, as well as a number of related goals, necessitates the promotion of rural transformation and improvement of urban-rural linkages. This could be attained through targeted investments in infrastructure, in food systems capable of delivering safe, sustainable and nutritious food to urban markets, and in expanding economic opportunity for rural and peri-urban populations along the supply chain. One key prerequisite is to improve productive capacities by ensuring that rural people, especially women and young people, have adequate, affordable access to key productive assets such as land, and to education, technology, infrastructure and financial services;

(f) Rapid, sustained economic growth and increased agricultural productivity, though quite modest, over the past decade and more, have helped the proportion of undernourished people drop by almost half. Many African countries that used to suffer from famine and hunger can now meet the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable. In general, a significant number of African countries have made huge progress in eradicating extreme hunger. However, hunger and malnutrition have continued to constitute a huge barrier to development in most African countries. About 330 million people, or almost one in every four Africans, are estimated to be chronically undernourished, and about one in four children under the age of five years is stunted;

(g) Effective continental leadership and ownership of the transformation agenda is essential for effective implementation, delivery and accountability for results. Strong political commitment to end hunger and promote food security, must be driven by frameworks such as the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development (CAADP) Programme. All regional institutions, programmes and policies must be harmonized and aligned with the achievement of the Malabo Declaration. All international partners are requested to align with this clear priority of the continent. South-South cooperation has been a particularly effective means of advancing policies and programmes towards ending hunger and should be further strengthened;

(h) Conflicts and civil insecurity continue to pose daunting challenges in respect of food security in Africa. The correlation between the exposure of communities to conflict and civil insecurity, and the deterioration of their food security and nutrition situation is well documented. In context, the three pre-famine conditions currently reported in Africa are all linked to the impact of protracted conflict, which mainly affects rural communities where agriculture is the mainstay of the local economy. There is now greater recognition among African Governments of the importance of ensuring peace and stability, the lack of which has been both the cause and consequence of conflicts that risk thwarting efforts to fight food insecurity in many African countries;

(i) While most African countries have embarked on programmes and projects that aim at enhancing incomes of small-scale farmers through input subsidies and other measures intended to increase agricultural production, there is not yet substantial evidence of improvement in the agricultural productivity of small-scale farmers. Most small-scale farmers in Africa grow food, but their productivity is so low that they have little surplus for market and are themselves quite poor, hungry and food-insecure. African countries need to harness the potential for improving yields and, thereby, incomes for small-scale farmers;

(j) Despite the commitments for targeted investments in agriculture under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), and an important increase in the share of total government expenditure on agriculture since 2011, the sector remains sharply

underinvested. Because of the general decline in overall national expenditure, the absolute amount of investment has continued to decline. Increased investments in agriculture are therefore needed to contain extreme hunger and feed into processing industries and export trade. Increased investments in research and development for climate-resistant breeds and appropriate technology — for example, irrigation and the development of value chains, as well as other proactive measures, such as investor-friendly policies and regulations — are all required to expand both agricultural output and productivity;

(k) Frequent droughts and floods, changed precipitation patterns and extreme weather conditions are currently the norm rather than the exception in many parts of Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa, Sahel and Southern Africa. Such weather conditions continue to pose serious challenges to food security and nutrition. Thus food security cannot be achieved without climate-proofing Africa's food systems and enhancing productivity of the ecosystems that underpin production in the first place. There is, therefore, an imperative for progress in climate resilience building, including early warning systems.

D. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all

1. Introduction

17. Health and well-being are cornerstones for productive lives free of poverty. Many countries in Africa have already stepped up their efforts to achieve universal and equitable access to high-quality health care for all (people with disabilities, children, young people, senior populations, rural populations, and vulnerable groups), including health promotion and universal access to comprehensive reproductive health services, voluntary family planning, to ensure the realization of reproductive rights, and to improve health systems and health financing, among other imperatives. However, progress between and within subregions and individual countries remains varied, and major challenges abound. For instance, at 25 per cent, Africa excluding North Africa has the world's highest unmet need for family planning. This has an impact on progress in related areas of health for women, children and for the ageing population. Except for North Africa, Africa remains the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, although deaths due to HIV/AIDS have declined by almost half in the last 10 years, owing to programmes on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and strong anti-retroviral treatment in member States. Nonetheless, the prevalence rate, estimated at 4.8 per cent in 2014 in the region, remains disturbingly high. Africa also continues to bear the brunt of the global burden of tuberculosis, and accounts for 28 per cent of the estimated 9.6 million cases that occurred worldwide in 2014. It is also noteworthy that, while communicable diseases remain a major threat, non-communicable diseases are on the upswing because of changing lifestyles and ageing, especially in urban areas. In addition, neglected tropical diseases, rare diseases, genetic disorders and mental health issues continue to pose challenges for Africa.

2. Key messages

18. Key messages include:

(a) Health is slowly moving from the margins of policy debates to a central position in development planning in Africa. This is evident from the increased attention being given to health issues through a number of policy frameworks and instruments. In order to promote healthy lives and ensure universal access to health services, including for SRH, and deliver health care to all, however, it is necessary to avoid fragmentation in funding and interventions, to strengthen health-care systems

and primary health care, to ensure effective multisectoral responses, provide adequate financing as well as to address the problem of unequal access to effective services;

(b) Member States are on average still far from meeting key health-care financing goals. Among such goals is that set in the Abuja Declarations and the Frameworks of 2000/2001 for Action on Roll Back Malaria, and on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases, of allocating 15 per cent of national budgets to health; in addition, non-communicable diseases such as fistula and cancer. The failure to attain set financing targets, among other factors, has meant that Africa's investment in the health sector remains lower than that of other regions. Sustained investments in accessible health care, coupled with appropriate reforms, are needed in order to have in place resilient systems that can respond effectively to the health needs of African people. Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen health care, including by building climate resilient health systems;

(c) Government spending on health is far below recommended levels, and an overreliance on out-of-pocket pushes many into poverty or deters their use of essential health services. Many low-income countries are almost reliant on donor funds, which are usually restricted to project funding. The situation adds to reporting and management complexities. Governments are called on to ensure fair and mandatory public financing to build universal and equitable health coverage;

(d) Weak data systems and data gaps in some member States in the areas of demography and certain health indicators, in particular, the very limited disaggregation of indicators, pose serious challenges for the effective monitoring and evaluation of progress and control of diseases. Enhancing the availability of disaggregated data and empirical evidence in the health-related Sustainable Development Goals is of critical importance. In this context, strong and robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be put in place and supported by credible data to inform analysis and the design and implementation of policy. Countries need to strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems to monitor progress towards the health-related indicators of the Goals;

(e) Redistributive fiscal policies allowing for social protection systems that target the poor, marginalized and vulnerable are indispensable in addressing health inequities and inequitable conditions among people. Countries should, therefore, be supported in designing and implementing such fiscal policies, including ensuring that the private or the joint sector (which funds large capital development projects) plans for and sets aside a dedicated budget in their environment protection plans to address health challenges that are faced by both the resident locals and the migrant workforce where, for example, mining or major works are taking place, such as the construction of roads and bridges;

(f) Domestic resource mobilization is critical for sustainable health outcomes in Africa. Africa should expand the domestic fiscal space through increased economic growth for broader and progressive taxation, which will allow more public revenues to be spent on health. In addition, it should strengthen partnerships within the framework of South-South cooperation to leverage resources for health financing. In parallel, African countries will need to ensure access to continuing health funding, such as through the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, in particular for service delivery in situations where local capacities do not meet threshold requirements, and strengthen existing partnerships;

(g) Africa has adopted regional frameworks and initiatives that demonstrate political will and commitment, and which should be pursued to realize the region's vision of harnessing its demographic dividend to achieve the health-related goals and targets, and sustainable development. The following are among those regional strategic frameworks and agreements that should be fully supported and

implemented: the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; the Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030; the Abuja Declarations and Frameworks of 2000/2001 For Action on Roll Back Malaria, HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and other Related Infectious Diseases on increasing government funding for health; the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa; the Addis Ababa Declaration of 2006 on Community Health in the African Region; the 2012 Tunis Declaration on Value for Money, Sustainability and Accountability in the Health Sector; the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa Beyond 2014 and its operational guide; the 2016-2030 Maputo Plan of Action for the Operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for SRH; and the 2016 Africa disability protocol adopted in Banjul;

(h) In the context of health and development, it is imperative that Africa achieves its goals to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities. At the same time, it must respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all people, especially those living with HIV, vulnerable and marginalized populations; it must also eliminate all barriers that hamper women's rights to affordable and high-quality SRH services, and promote gender equality and rights. Global health and HIV-related strategies, for example, the 2016-2021 Strategy On the Fast Track to End AIDS of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the 2017-2022 Strategy of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria Investing to the End the Epidemics, and the Strategy of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief PEPFAR 3.0 — Controlling the Epidemic: Delivering on the Promise of an AIDS-free Generation, note the centrality of human rights and investing in human rights programmes in the context of HIV and AIDS. There is also a growing recognition of the need for a rights-based response to tuberculosis, all forms of mental health and genetic disorders. In addition, Africa should address the root causes of chronic and emerging diseases arising from environmental causes including air and water pollution;

(i) There is a need for the States of Africa to collaborate and for international assistance in respect of health innovation, including drug and health technology development and assessment, in order to improve access to essential, good quality and affordable medicines, eradicate rampant and emerging diseases and expand life expectancies of populations.

E. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

1. Introduction

19. Pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls should lie at the heart of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, if poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable development are to be realized. Progress has been made in girls' enrolment in primary education, and in women's representation in national parliaments and local governments. Yet, challenges abound in terms of the quality of education and enrolment beyond primary education; women's effective participation in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels; high maternal mortality rates, and prevalence of violence against women and harmful practices as well as the promotion of social norms justifying such violence. Despite major shifts in labour markets across the world, African labour markets are stable in terms of status and sector of female employment whereby women predominantly work as contributing family workers in agriculture sector without pay. If the gap in women's education and skills is not addressed and if the burden follows from unpaid care, work is not recognized and

redistributed, progress in women's economic empowerment cannot take place and positive externalities to other Sustainable Development Goals will not extend.

2. Key messages

20. Key messages include:

(a) Growth that overlooks or worsens gender inequality cannot be inclusive or sustainable. Appropriate measures and stronger action must be taken to reflect issues relating to gender and to women, including those relevant to girls and young women, in the national integrated plans that countries are developing to incorporate the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their domestic legal frameworks, and also in regional strategies and plans to harness the demographic and gender dividend. The ministries responsible for national integrated planning for the implementation of both agendas should promote multisectoral coordination and strengthen the positioning, funding and technical capacities as well as ensure the full and effective participation of the ministries in charge of gender equality and women's empowerment, and of women's movements and gender experts to ensure that gender issues are taken on board and member States' accountability is increased;

(b) Generation of statistics relating to gender should be a key component of gender equality and sustainable development efforts in Africa. Countries, in collaboration with the international community, should support the Africa Data Revolution to facilitate a systematic integration and appropriate funding of gender dimensions into national statistics systems in support of policymaking and tracking of progress on gender equality. The collection, interpretation and analysis of valuable gender relevant data should ensure the engagement of various stakeholders, including women's rights organizations;

(c) A number of African countries have formulated policies and enacted laws to secure and protect the rights of women and girls, although some countries still have laws that discriminate against women in the private and public spheres. The challenge is therefore to ensure that all countries in the region undertake necessary legislative reform to protect the rights of women and girls, and address the current weak implementation and enforcement of already existing frameworks, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and Addis Ababa Declaration of Population and Development beyond 2014. Innovative policies are desperately needed to engage men and boys as champions and enablers of gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in addressing social norms and stereotypes through the engagement of cultural and faith-based leaders. Key to the strengthened implementation of the frameworks is accompanying them by appropriate resources and strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

(d) African countries' commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment should go along with the harnessing of domestic resources — both financial and human — to implement fully and urgently the gender goals, in order to steer the development discourse in the right direction, and to maximize the potential and outcomes of women's social, economic and political empowerment. Sufficient financial and human resources should be allocated for the implementation of the gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment goals, which will inevitably accelerate the achievement of all other goals under the Agendas. Instituting gender-responsive budgeting is among the first policy tools, along with implementing gender-responsive macroeconomic policies to ensure economic justice for women. Addressing regressive tax systems, along with illicit financial flows, should elevate domestic resources that member States can mobilize to tackle challenges;

(e) Violence against women and girls under various guises constitutes the most pervasive form of violation of women's and girls' basic human rights. A critical barrier to the elimination of such violence, which should be urgently addressed, is the lack of laws that criminalize it or, where such laws exist, failure to enforce them effectively. Legal frameworks on domestic violence should be complemented by community-level engagement and the safety of women rights' defenders must be ensured;

(f) African countries have made commendable progress towards ensuring women's participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, including in peace, conflict and humanitarian settings. Concern, however, remains for the extent to which women fully and effectively participate in leadership and decision-making at national and local levels. Other areas include women's absence in managerial positions in the formal private sector, women's underrepresentation in the judiciary and, finally, the experience across the continent of the shrinking space that women rights organizations are allotted;

(g) Special attention should be given to women's economic empowerment by harnessing their entrepreneurial talent and opportunities, and guaranteeing full enjoyment of productive employment and decent work for all women, especially those in vulnerable situations. As a precursor to this, ensuring access at all levels to high-quality education and skills with revised curricula that no longer contribute to the promotion of undesirable gender norms for women and adolescent girls. In this context, women and girls, particularly in rural areas, should be fully involved in and benefit from strategies and initiatives to transform and diversify the continent's economies, which requires tackling the burden of women's unpaid care work, ensuring equal pay for equal work and access to and ownership of land, and access to other productive assets and financial services;

(h) There are alarming rates of maternal mortality and an unmet need for voluntary family planning, in particular among younger women. Greater investment in women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH) should be prioritized in development planning and financing at all levels. In this, it is critical for African countries and the international community to reaffirm the promise and fulfil the rights of women and girls, and guarantee their universal access to such health and family planning services, and to increase investment in this area. It is crucial to invest in the well-being of adolescent girls, given the size of this population group. It is critical to protect them from situations and conditions that occur, in global terms, at the highest rate in Africa, including female genital mutilation, early marriage, and adolescent pregnancy. Addressing these are crucial to fulfilling their rights, keeping girls in school, and ensuring the gender dividend as well as a demographic dividend that is needed to drive inclusive economic growth and prosperity for all in Africa.

F. Building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation

1. Introduction

21. Infrastructure, industrialization and innovation are among Africa's top priorities that are recognized as central to higher economic growth and poverty eradication. Progress in the goals under this sub-theme is vital to African countries' efforts to bridge the infrastructure gap, including the development of modern, clean and low-carbon energy, and to harness the transformative and job-creating potential

of industrialization and innovation for shared green growth and prosperity; and for the realization of the two Agendas.

22. Commodities export-based growth has not served Africa well and has contributed to inequality and increased unemployment. Green industrialization, focused on transforming Africa's natural resources and powered by the continent's clean energy resources, provides an opportunity for Africa to leapfrog and plug competitively in global value chains, thereby creating inclusive job opportunities. Infrastructure and trade are key enablers for green industrialization. Africa can take a late-comer advantage of advances in innovation, falling costs of low-carbon technologies, and the need to diversify and strengthen the macroeconomic basis of economies.

23. African countries should diversify and move away from traditional trade patterns, which are marked by an excessive reliance on exports of raw materials and semi-processed goods and on traditional comparative advantages of raw materials and unskilled labour.

2. Key messages

24. Key messages include:

(a) Inclusive and sustainable industrial development is a significant source of income, which allows for rapid and sustained increases in living standards for all people, including women and young people. Without green industrialization, a sustainable path of economic development will not be achieved. Industry (including agroindustry) provides a breeding ground for entrepreneurship, fosters technological dynamism and productivity growth, creates skilled jobs and, through intersectoral linkages, establishes the foundation for the expansion of both agriculture and services — leaving no one behind. Within the process of globalization, the interconnection and interdependence between industrial development and trade are increasing. Global and regional value chains, linking the entire sequence of activities from raw material extraction, production, design, and research and development, to marketing, delivery and disposal after use, opens up new avenues for domestic industrial capacity-building, transfer and co-development of clean technologies and the structural transformation of developing countries;

(b) It is important to focus on poor households and communities, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industries, and to help them link up with the global economy, agroindustries and rural industrialization, and regional industrial development. Effective and inclusive participation in the regional and global value chain can play an important role in poverty eradication efforts. SMEs account for the majority of registered enterprises in Africa and for a large share of new jobs created over the last decade, including for young people. This share is even higher in the "informal economy". However, SMEs have difficulty with access and affordability of capital and technical skills and, as a result, face difficulties scaling up. In order to better support SMEs, it is important for financial institutions to develop knowledge and expertise in the sectors where SMEs are active. International support should be engaged to complement national efforts. Support directed to the development of SMEs should aim to develop capacities through experience and facilitate them to grow and transition out of the informal economy, as well as to increase fiscal revenue;

(c) The high transaction costs related to unreliable and expensive power supply and telecommunications, and poor transport infrastructure arising from non-regionalization of critical infrastructure, have undermined the development of competitive and productive capacities of African economies, contributing to the marginalization of the region in world trade, finance and investment. They have also contributed to a poor supply response to structural adjustment policies and the

failure to diversify. Investment in, rehabilitating, modernizing, greening and expanding Africa's transport, telecommunications, water and energy infrastructure should be prioritized. Because of its capital-intensive nature, adequate efforts will be possible only by joining forces with the private sector, international and emerging partners. Leading countries on the continent should act as regional hubs for technology transfer;

(d) The development of national education and training systems and programmes is crucial as a means to address the capacity gaps in terms of design and implementation of projects and resilient infrastructure. Capacity development should span both technical and financial competencies, including the ability to address taxation and illicit financial flows. All actors need to be brought together, not only by the government and private sectors, but also by education and training providers, including through vocational and technical education. Regional experience sharing should be used to address capacity gaps;

(e) Innovation offers unique opportunities to "late-developer" countries to leapfrog: they can seize opportunities not only in emerging but also in mature industries. Late developers are not locked in, and can benefit from entering mature industries without having to bear the research and development costs. As other world regions, Africa has particularly benefited from innovations enabled by information and communication technologies — better take-up and use is imperative. Investment in research and development should be considerably increased, and attention should be given to the development of climate information and services, resilient infrastructure and green industrialization capacities. In addition to facilitating technology transfer, there is a need for a regional approach to collaborative research and development as a key mechanism for nurturing local innovation. Research partnerships must be established between universities, private firms, civil society organizations and Governments. Supporting grassroot innovation and innovative partnerships, including South-South, should be explored;

(f) The challenges in financing can be addressed by shifting the perception from a focus on financing gaps to investment and research and development opportunities, bearing in mind previous global commitments on the financing of resilient and green infrastructure. Clear, simple and stable regulation is needed for private sector investment. Governments should look to channels of domestic resource mobilization, including ending illicit financial flows. Affordable and sustainable support from international and South-South partners should complement national efforts. Furthermore, Governments could be supported by high-level "business units" comprised of finance experts in charge of developing public-private partnerships, to attract finance from financial markets, remittances and other innovative mechanisms, for example;

(g) All governments, including regional and local authorities, should promote inclusive, ecologically-sound industrialization and the provision of a modern and well-maintained infrastructure that incorporates the protection of nature, especially investing in renewable energy and solar energy infrastructure and participatory decision-making.

G. Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

1. Introduction

25. Africa has vast ocean, sea and marine resources that are fundamental to the realization of sustainable development in the region. Freshwater and ocean fish

make a vital contribution to the food and nutritional security of more than 200 million Africans, and provide income for more than 10 million. The sustainable management of marine resources is pivotal to poverty eradication, given that most of the poor rely on natural resources for their livelihood and poverty reduction strategies. The potential of marine resources to eradicate poverty and to foster sustainable development in the region, however, is undermined by multiple challenges that undercut livelihood opportunities, resulting in major economic losses and degradation of the very resources upon which the continent depends. Such challenges include overfishing and illegal fishing, and fishing that is unreported and unregulated, which contributes to illicit financial flows. Other obstacles include pollution (both land and sea), unsustainable tourism, coastal erosion and flooding. Many of these factors are further aggravated by climate change. Achieving human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development for the majority of people is tied to sustainable use and management of oceans and marine resources. Ensuring the health of oceans is as important as ensuring the lives of the population that depend on the oceans for their livelihood and survival.

2. Key messages

26. Key messages include:

(a) Achieving long-term sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa will depend on the sustainable and optimal management of its natural capital, including oceans, seas and marine resources. This notwithstanding, African coasts and marine space are facing a cycle of declining ecosystem health and productivity. This is brought on by an increased demand in living and non-living resources, the development of new technologies, the decline in fish stocks, climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, as well as weak ocean governance. The ocean-based and marine-based natural capital should therefore be harnessed through sound social, environmental and economic policy regimes. It is also crucial to eliminate, reverse and recoup illicit financial activities in order to enhance the flow of marine resources-based economic and social benefits and increased investments for sustainable development of ocean and sea resources. The rise in sea level makes it critical to protect the marine coast, fresh water and the ecosystem along the shores. This extends to creating and protecting marine areas, such as mangroves, to strengthen the linkages between oceans and seas, which are critical to the health of oceans;

(b) Effective governance and integrated approaches to the management of Africa's ocean and marine resources are crucial to the achievement of targets under Sustainable Development Goal 14 as it links to other goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Currently, however, Africa's rich marine and coastal resources are managed within what is perceived to be weak ocean governance framework and sectoral approaches. An emerging and promising comprehensive initiative is the application of ecosystem approaches in the management of the economic exclusion zones and high seas. Such approaches should include effective management tools that are culturally and socially acceptable, and economically feasible, in particular co-management approaches using local and coastal communities. Blue economy policies, strategies and legal frameworks at national and regional levels should be implemented;

(c) Transboundary approaches to management of shared marine resources are needed to enhance national and regional efforts to face challenges in the marine and coastal environment, as well as implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As the world transitions to an inclusive green/blue economy and looks towards oceans and blue natural capital for the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, countries will continue to rely on the "shared seas" approach to restore the

health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and to maintain their biodiversity, as envisaged under the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Successful and timely implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions is critical to address and harness, respectively, the opportunities arising from climate change to the sustainable development and management of oceans, seas and marine resources. Blue carbon should be integrated into global climate action activities in recognition of oceans and associate coastal ecosystems as important sinks in order to leverage finance for the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions;

(e) Strengthening the capacity of coastal African countries, in particular that of the least developed countries, islands and small island developing States, especially in the context of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, is crucial for sustainable, managed and enhanced social, economic and environmental benefits from oceans, seas and marine resources. Investments are needed to enhance knowledge capacity of least developed countries and small island developing States in ocean and marine science on the interaction between oceans, and climate impacts on marine and ocean resources, and to strengthen the marine observation capacity;

(f) Implementation of an ecosystem-based approach for sustainable management and the protection of Africa seas and oceans requires enhanced regional and subregional cooperation. These approaches should take into consideration the history, culture and common interest of the region. A number of transboundary or local-cumulative problems — such as marine pollution, unplanned urbanization in coastal cities and urban poverty, overfishing, climate change, impacts from oil and gas exploration, illegal trade in flora and fauna — though with global impacts, can be readily addressed at the regional or subregional levels. Regional approaches such as the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) should be supported and fully implemented. This will allow identification and implementation to scale best practices and regional approaches to maintain and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems, and will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(g) Regional and international cooperation is critical in order to combat piracy, all forms of marine pollution, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and strengthen maritime safety and security against illegal transportation and trade in protected and endangered species, as well as human trafficking. Countries should cooperate in sharing information, including commercial or other intelligence. Joint naval patrols and cooperation in enacting piracy laws and prosecution could also go a long way towards keeping pirates at bay;

(h) Urgent and enforceable action must be taken by the international community to prohibit, phase out and eliminate harmful fishery subsidies that threaten African fish stock and species, as well as other barriers that affect Africa's participation in international fish trade;

(i) Given the interactions between inland waters and oceans, the integrated management of aquatic ecosystems in general is necessary to ensure the sustainable management of marine resources.